

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 12210

MADRAS 1497 FOLLOWS. SENT TO NEW DELHI FOR ACTION ON 19
AUG 76. BEING REPTD FOR YOUR INFO.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRAS 1497

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: ARREST OF KARUNANIDHI NEARING?

REF: MADRAS 1472

1. SUMMARY: SPECULATION THAT KARUNANIDHI'S ARREST MAY TAKE PLACE
IN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE CONTINUES, AS STATEMENTS BY HIM
AND OTHER DMK LEADERS ADD TO THE GROWING BELIEF THAT THE PARTY LEAD-

SHIP IS PREPARING THE PARTY FOR HIS DETENTION. WE EMPHASIZE THAT

THIS IS HIGHLY SPECULATIVE BUT WONDER OURSELVES IF THE CENTER MAY
NOT DECIDE TO MOVE AGAINST HIM SINCE THE POLICY TOWARD THE DMK SINCE
THE IMPOSITION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE HAD FAILED TO FINISH OF THE

PARTY AND ITS LEADER. IT IS GENERALLY CONCEDED THAT HE IS THE ONLY
EFFECTIVE LEADER THE PARTY HAS, AND HIS ARREST WOULD FURTHER UNDERMINE

THE DMK. END SUMMARY.

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2. RECENT STATEMENTS OF DMK PRESIDENT AND FORMER CHIEF MINISTER M. KARUNANIDHI AND OTHER DMK LEADERS INDICATE THAT THEY EXPECT TO BE ARRESTED WITHIN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE, AND THEY SEEM TO BE PREPARING THE DMK FAITHFUL FOR THIS EVENTUALITY. THIS IS ALL HIGHLY SPECULATIVE, OF COURSE, BUT KARUNANIDHI HIMSELF IS REPORTEDLY RESIGNED TO BEING ARRESTED AND IS SAID TO BE PREPARING HIMSELF FOR THIS FINAL INDIGNITY. PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF CONGRESS (R) OFFICIALS AND THE ANTI-DMK PRESS TEND TO CONFIRM THAT SOMETHING MAY BE IN THE OFFING.

3. THE LATEST RUMOR TO SURFACE IS THAT THE CBI WILL FILE CHARGES AGAINST KARUNANIDHI ON AUGUST 21 AND THAT THERE IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY

HE WILL BE ARRESTED AT THAT TIME. HE IS PLANNING A TOUR OF COIMBATORE DURING THAT PERIOD, AND THE SPECULATION HAS IT THAT HE WOULD BE ARREST-

ED WHILE HE IS OUT OF MADRAS. STILL ANOTHER LINE OF THINKING HAS IT THAT HE WILL BE ARRESTED BEFORE THE CONVENING OF THE SARKARIA COMMISSION

ON AUGUST 23. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE COMMISSION'S SITTING WHICH INDICATES THAT IT WILL "GO INTO THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE ERSTWHILE CHIEF MINISTER AND OTHER MINISTERS OF TAMIL " MAY HAVE INCREASED THE RUMORS IN CIRCULATION, BUT WHATEVER THE REASON, THERE IS FAIRLY WIDE EXPECTATION THAT SOMETHING IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN TO KARUNANIDHI AND THE DMK. IN THIS REGARD WE HAVE RELIABLE INFORMATION THAT THE POLICE ON AUGUST 3 WERE IN FACT ASSESSING THE LIKELY REACTION TO KARUNANIDHI'S ARREST, LEADING TO A PRESUMPTION THAT THEY WERE CONSIDERING ARRESTING HIM ABOUT THAT TIME.

4. SOME OBSERVERS HERE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT KARUNANIDHI'S ARREST WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AND THAT HIS MARTYRDOM WOULD "STRENGTHEN THE DMK." HOWEVER WE HAVE HEARD REPEATEDLY FROM KNOWLEDGEABLE LOCAL SOURCES THAT KARUNANIDHI IS THE ONLY MAN TO LEAD THE PARTY, AND HIS REMOVAL AT THIS PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT TIME FOR THE PARTY WOULD LEAVE IT LEADERLESS, AT LEAST FOR SOME TIME.

5. WE ARE INCLINED TO WONDER WHETHER DELHI MIGHT NOT BECOME IMPATIENT WITH THE WAY THINGS HAVE BEEN GOING FOR KARUNANIDHI AND THE DMK AND DECIDE TO GO AHEAD AND PUT HIM AWAY. WHILE HIS MOVEMENTS HAVE BEEN SEVERELY CIRCUMSCRIBED SINCE FEBRUARY 1, HE HAS SIMPLY REFUSED TO

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FADE AWAY, AND HE REMAINS A TROUBLESOME POLITICAL FACTOR IN TAMIL NADU

FOR THE CONGRESS PARTY. THUS, DELHI MIGHT REASON, IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO GET HIM OUT OF THE WAY. MANY IN THE DMK MIGHT THEN GRAVITATE TOWARD

THE ADMK, WITH RESULTING POSSIBILITY OF DISINTEGRATION OF THE DMK. THE

FACTORS WHICH BROUGHT THE DMK INTO BEING IN THE FIRST PLACE WOULD

REMAIN, BUT THERE WOULD BE NO ANNADURAI, KARUNANIDHI OR OTHER LEADER AROUND WHOM ADHERENTS TO THE DMK PHILOSOPHY COULD COALESCE AND THE CONGRESS PARTY COULD THEN HOPE TO RECLAIM ITS OLD POSITION OF DOMINANCE

IN THE STATE.

6. WITH KARUNANIDHI REMOVED FROM THE DMK LEADERSHIP, THE POSSIBILITY OF A DMK/ADMK MERGER WOULD BE RAISED, SINCE M. G. RAMACHANDRAN'S (MGR) DEPARTURE FROM THE DMK WAS PREDICATED ALMOST ENTIRELY ON HIS OPPOSITION TO KARUNANIDHI. HOWEVER, MGR WOULD PROBABLY BE VERY LEERY OF MOVING CLOSER TO THE DMK UNTIL ITS NAME IS COMPLETELY CLEARED, AND WOULD PROBABLY BE MUCH MORE INCLINED TO COLLABORATE WITH THE CONGRESS (R).

7. WE DO NOT DISCOUNT THE FACT THAT CARUNANIDHI'S ARREST COULD SPARK SOME VIOLENCE, THOUGH IT WOULD PROBABLY BE MINOR SINCE THE DMK HARD CORE CONTINUES IN DETENTION. THE POLICE ARE OBVIOUSLY AWARE OF THIS POSSIBILITY AND LOCAL SECURITY FORCES ARE PROBABLY MAINTAINED AT A LEVEL ADEQUATE TO CONTAIN ANY VIOLENCE. STILL ISOLATED CASES OF VIOLENCE, SABOTAGE, DEMONSTRATIONS, ETC. CAN NOT BE RULED OUT, AND THE POLICE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO CRACK A FEW HEADS TO CONTAIN IT.

8. I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE AGAIN THAT THIS IS ALL HIGHLY SPECULATIVE.

POLL,SEEING INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE E. L. STRACEY, ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE HINDU KRISHNA BALARAMAN, AND OTHERS AT LUNCH AT MY HOUSE ON AUGUST 22. ADDITIONALLY, I HOPE TO SEE FIRST ADDITIONAL SOLICITOR GENERAL V. P. RAMAN, WHO IS HANDLING THE CASE AGAINST THE DMK FOR THE GOI, IN MADRAS THIS WEEK OR IN NEW DELHI WHEN I AM THERE NEXT WEEK, AND I MAY PIN SOMETHING DOWN ON ALL THIS. IN THE MEANTIME, I THOUGHT THE EMBASSY MIGHT FIND OUR SPECULATION INTERESTING.

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